# “We do not want aid from the world. We want to stop the war.”

## Community priorities and perceptions of aid and mutual support in Gaza

Gaza, occupied Palestinian territory | August 2024



GROUND TRUTH SOLUTIONS

AWRAD
أوراد
مركز العالم العربي للبحوث والتنمية
Arab World for Research & Development

I need urgent help • There are dead bodies • Focus on the suffering of the children of Gaza • Stop war, killing and destruction • The media does not show the real picture • Please provide medical centres • The situation is very difficult for civilians • I am injured and my future is ruined • Aid does not reach people • We need aid and medicine, especially for children • We need the internet • I am tired and bear the responsibility for my children alone • I need to rest and travel to get medical treatment • I want security and stability • We need cooking gas • I want you to think about rehabilitating and raising children after the war • Pay more attention to the sick and the elderly • We need healthcare for children and health centres • Make sure those responsible for aid are delivering it to people who deserve it • Children need food and clothing • We need aid, bedding and clothes • Psychological pressures have led to high blood pressure and diabetes • Stop the war, rebuild Gaza, return life to before October 7 • I want to live a decent life • View the Palestinian people as a defenceless civil people and not political parties • Look at us with mercy • Spread justice by distributing aid • People steal aid and exploit the displaced • Secure the future of our children • Children must be cared for and provided with psychological support • I am injured and need an operation, but there is no health care • Deliver aid to all people and provide it fairly • Tragedy and poverty prevail over everyone • We need cooking gas • Ceasefire! • We have the right to receive aid equally • We need drinking water • Please provide resources for all people interested in children's education • Provide work or sources of income • We need financial aid • A war of genocide • I have the right to live like other people • Food rations are not distributed fairly • The elderly are marginalised in the war • No one stands with us • We thank you for your silence • The international community failed us • Let us return to our homes, even if they are destroyed • Genocide is our destiny • We are dying a slow death • They know everything that happens to us • The children of Gaza are dying from famine and genocide • We just want safety • Enough destruction and devastation • I fear sleeping and not waking up • We are dying and no one is listening to us • The international community is satisfied with our massacres • For nine months, you watch us in silence • Treat us like human beings • Our life is hell and anguish • We have lost our dignity and our dreams • My future and the future of my children is lost • There is no life • Destruction, devastation, and a non-existent future • We are living in a cemetery • We even lost our dignity • Every day we are exposed to bombing, terror and fear • We are tired physically and psychologically • We will not bear it any longer • Have mercy on us, please • We are dying, help us • I want to return home • We were sentenced to death while we were alive • Our lives are destroyed • I hope for the end of the war • We are dead, bodies without a soul • People die a thousand times every day • The world is aware of the tragedy of Gaza, and remains unmoved • I miss my old self • Either death, displacement, or stopping the war • Stop the war for the sake of our children • Life in Gaza is fear, war and death • Save what remains of Gaza • If we do not die from war, we will die from diseases • Life in Gaza is all humiliation and tragedy • The whole world is just watching • Hear the voice of the people of Gaza • We lack everything, even air to breathe • A present and a future that is devoid of everything • We are tired • When will the war end? • What is happening in Gaza on the ground is much more horrific than what is presented to the outside world • Death follows us everywhere • Hell • Shame on you • We have become beggars • I am speechless • Is there an international community at all? • No education, no health, no food • In the blink of an eye, I lost everything • We are living in a tragedy that we cannot describe • We want peace and an end to the war • What more pain do you want than this? • Why have you left us in this situation until now? • **We do not want aid from the world. We want to stop the war.**

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# Who we are

Ground Truth Solutions (GTS) is an international, non-governmental organisation dedicated to ensuring the priorities of people affected by crisis are systematically considered in humanitarian and climate action, from individual responses to system-wide humanitarian reform. Evidence and ideas gathered through rigorous research and inclusive dialogue enable crisis-affected communities to actively shape the decisions that impact their lives. Headquartered in Austria, GTS works globally as an independent advocate, collaborating closely with local partners who share our vision.

Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD) is a pioneering research, consulting and development firm. Based in Palestine, AWRAD is one of the Arab region's leading firms, providing partners with a full range of consulting and technical services for sustainable development and institution building. With a diverse and dynamic team – including expertise in research, economic and institutional development, gender studies, monitoring and evaluation including third-party monitoring – AWRAD offers research, technical assistance and data collection and analysis across a diverse range of technical areas.


To find out more about our work in Gaza please contact Julien George julien@groundtruthsolutions.org or Samer Said awrad@awrad.org

# Introduction

Ten months of relentless Israeli attacks have left Gaza in ruins – experts label the besieged enclave as "destroyed."[1] The most recent violence, according to the World Health Organization, "does not come in a vacuum." Palestine has endured over five decades of conflict, hunger and despair.[2] The media has been reporting the death of 40,000 people, with many more unaccounted for as cities have been reduced to rubble. Researchers estimate that the loss of up to 186,000 lives could be attributable to the current conflict.[3]

The UN's Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory details a harrowing picture in a report entitled "Anatomy of a Genocide": 70% of residential areas destroyed, almost an entire population forcibly displaced, whole families wiped out, arbitrary detention, a collapsed health system, bodies decomposing in plain sight, and "incalculable collective trauma [that] will be experienced for generations to come."[4]

Even if a ceasefire were announced today, the health implications of the armed conflict will persist for years, claiming lives through reproductive, communicable and non-communicable diseases.[5]

In June 2024, a group of independent famine experts declared that Israel's "intentional and targeted starvation campaign against the Palestinian people is a form of genocidal violence and has resulted in famine across all of Gaza." They called upon the international community to prioritise the delivery of humanitarian aid by land, end the siege and push for a ceasefire.[6]

**"Know the truth,"** one man in Deir al Balah urged us, **"about killing, extermination and famine."**

The attacks on Gaza have attracted a global outcry that has served to raise awareness of the territory's ongoing occupation and human rights abuses. In an Olympic year, 400 Palestinian athletes are said to have been killed,[7] and an entire generation of young people have lost a year of schooling.

Amidst the devastation, the attacks have also shone a global spotlight on the enduring strength of Palestinian culture. Traditional artwork and folk dances such as the Dabke are prevalent, seen in children's activities in camps and shelters across Gaza. Palestinian cuisine, embroidery, carvings and ceramics have become symbols of hope in the ceasefire movement.

Many people told us that they want to remind the world of their humanity. For some, this means celebrating their dignity and strength. "**We die standing like palm trees and we will not kneel,**" one woman in Gaza City told us. For others, it means reminding the world that Gazans are as human as anyone else. A man in Deir al Balah pleads: "**The Palestinians in general, especially in the Gaza strip, should not be viewed as either inferior to the rest of humanity or as superhumans. Look at us as normal human beings.**"

1 United Nations Human Rights Council. March 2024. "Anatomy of a Genocide – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese."
2 World Health Organization. May 2024. "Hostilities in the occupied Palestinian territory – Public Health Situation Analysis."
3 The Lancet. July 2024. "Counting the dead in Gaza: difficult but essential."
4 United Nations Human Rights Council. March 2024. "Anatomy of a Genocide – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese."
5 Ibid.
6 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. July 2024. "UN experts declare famine has spread throughout Gaza strip."
7 The Guardian. July 2024. "Palestine Olympic chief: no handshakes with Israelis unless they recognise state."

# Our study

Three months after the outbreak of the region's newest war on 7 October 2023, Ground Truth Solutions (GTS) and Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD) spoke to people in Gaza to find out what the humanitarian situation looked like from their perspective. Access challenges for large agencies were well known, but how had communities been supporting each other? What did aid access look like to people on the ground and what were people's main priorities? What did they want the international community to know? The results painted an alarming picture, of people doing what they could to take care of each other amid mounting, crippling fear. Our report published in January 2024, before any other large-scale quantitative analysis of the humanitarian response, was used across the world for humanitarian diplomacy and advocacy, as well as by actors looking to better support community-led responses.[8]

This second report contains insight generously shared by 1,248 people in Gaza between 22 June and 30 July 2024, via face-to-face surveys and in-depth interviews . It aims to inform the ongoing humanitarian response, as well as reporting and diplomacy among the media, engaged governments, human rights actors and humanitarian funders. It also seeks to allow people simply to share what they want to share during an acute crisis and to ensure they have a global audience. Through this work, we aim to stay engaged with the people of Gaza over time, helping to provide an accurate, nuanced humanitarian narrative which – we hope – will support efforts to align aid priorities with what communities most affected by the crisis really need.

# About the process

Conditions for data collection and analysis in Gaza are becoming even more dangerous and volatile, making it incredibly difficult to obtain robust data representing the voices of civilians. This second round of data collection started soon after violence displaced more than a million people from Rafah. In early May, the Israeli military seized and closed the Rafah crossing, severely limiting aid and supplies entering Gaza. People in North Gaza and Gaza City were particularly impacted with extremely limited access to assistance.

Throughout June and July 2024, violence and evacuation orders issued by the Israeli military continually forced people to move. Among countless acts of violence and forced displacement affecting civilians, the most significant to occur during data collection included the combat in the Shujayea neighbourhood between the end of June and early July, the evacuation orders for the eastern parts of Rafah, Khan Yunis and Gaza City in early July, and the evacuation orders for Khan Yunis and Deir Al Balah in late July.

Every single member of the Gaza-based team was personally affected, either being displaced at least once or choosing to stay in their homes in besieged neighbourhoods often because they had no other place to go. Work took place in an environment where no place is safe, during the hottest days of summer, with limited transport options and few chances to charge devices. Despite these extreme conditions, the enumerator team was able to collect data to high standards of sampling, interviewing, and data management – enabling us to present robust evidence of what it is like to live in Gaza.

## Who we talked to

We surveyed 1,226 people face-to-face, and spoke with 22 people via in-depth interviews.

### Quantitative sample:

**Gender**

- **48%** women (592)
- **52%** men (634)

**Age**

- **26%** 18–30 years old (316)
- **51%** 31–50 years old (627)
- **23%** 51+ years old (283)

**Forcibly displaced since 7 Oct 23**

- **95%** displaced (1,162)
- **5%** non-displaced (64)

**Number of times displaced**

- **45%** displaced 1–3 times (548)
- **36%** displaced 4–6 times (447)
- **14%** displaced 7+ times (167)

**Current location**

- **43%** Khan Yunis (521)
- **40%** Deir Al Balah (495)
- **12%** Gaza City (153)
- **5%** North Gaza (57)

**Origin of the displaced**

- **31%** Gaza City (385)
- **31%** Khan Yunis (384)
- **16%** North Gaza (191)
- **15%** Deir Al Balah (183)
- **7%** Rafah (83)

**Type of current residence**

- **35%** original residence (429)
- **27%** shelter (332)
- **20%** cluster of tents (240)
- **8%** hosted by a family (102)
- **7%** rented residence (91)
- **3%** other (32)

[8] Ground Truth Solutions. January 2024. "'Stop the war and let me return to my home, even if it is destroyed.' Community priorities and perceptions of aid and support in Gaza."

# Key findings

## Fight for survival in Gaza

The level of continual, forced displacement is unprecedented in Gaza. Nearly everyone we spoke to has been forced to move, often multiple times, since the war began. Feelings of exhaustion and unsafety, compounded by a lack of privacy is pushing people and hindering their abilities to cope more by the day. The vast majority fear losing a loved one, and most still feel unsafe where they live.

## People desperately need safety, food and clean water

Every single person interviewed says obtaining food and water and the safety and security of their family are urgent priorities. The more times a person is forced to flee, the more negative their coping strategies become. Most are cutting their food intake, drinking dirty water, postponing washing, and one in four say they have been forced to send their children to work. Almost half the people we spoke to mentioned that injury or illness hinders their capacity to cope. Many rely on their faith, family and community to persevere.

## Mutual aid comes naturally, but is reaching its limits as the war grinds on

Everyone has either provided or received support from others in their community, most commonly by providing food and water, sharing information and helping with daily tasks. Many say this has been more effective than international aid. These efforts continue, but as the conflict drags on and resources became even scarcer, some people say they are pushed to prioritise their needs and those of their families over solidarity with their extended communities.

## Accessing aid is dangerous and chaotic, and many say it is not fair

Distributions are described as unsafe, with mentions of theft and looting, and only a little over half feel respected in the process. People also voice concerns about corruption and favouritism. Only 18% think aid provision is fair. Women-headed households, children with no surviving family, sick, injured and chronically ill persons, and those living with disabilities are most commonly mentioned as missing out.

## Foreign aid is far from enough, and hampered by a lack of direct engagement

Most (71%) say their primary source of support in the past six months has been international aid. Their reliance on aid skyrockets with every new displacement. But it's nowhere near enough. Only a third of people know how to keep accessing humanitarian aid and services, and only 22% are confident they will receive it again.

## Acute cash shortages, profiteering and soaring prices

Fewer than half of those we spoke with can still rely on an income; a third are borrowing money from relatives or friends, and a quarter are using what is left of their savings. The lack of cash in the market and soaring prices are depleting people's abilities to cope. With each new displacement, people are less able to maintain their incomes. Commission by money-changers and profiteering by merchants is consuming people's remaining finances at a rapid rate.

## People turn to radio and each other for essential information

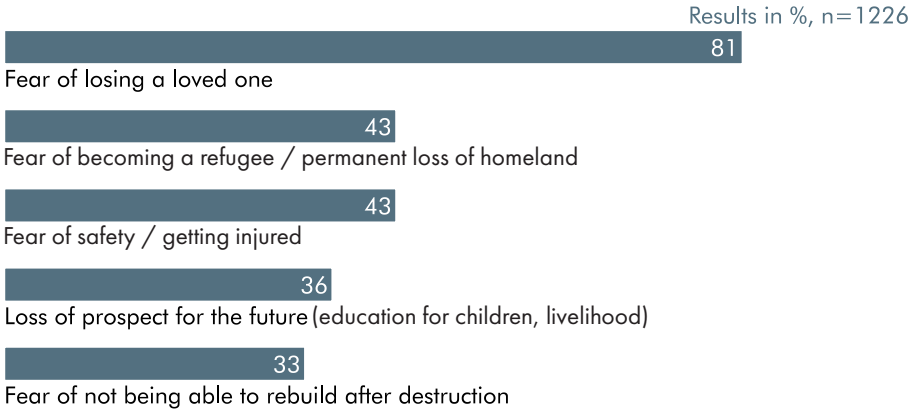
Most people get their information through word of mouth or the radio. A third of the people we spoke to provide information, and half receive information, as a form of help and support from their communities. When aid is scarce and accessing it is dangerous, knowing about how, when and where to find assistance is critical, but people struggle to access this information.

# Fight for survival in Gaza

Everyone in Gaza is living in fear, their lives racked with uncertainty amid a constant barrage of attacks that have made a mockery of the rules of war. For most people (81%), the fear of losing a loved one is the biggest, most pressing concern – almost double the number of those who fear most for their own safety (43%).

*Figure 1:*

**What is your biggest concern for yourself and your family?**

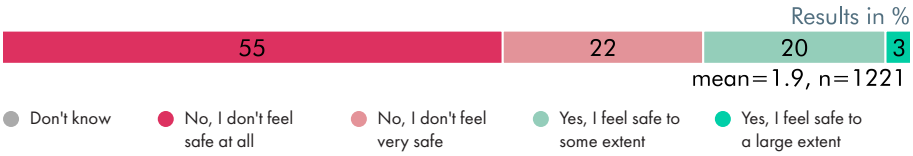



*Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.*

Since 7 October 2023, 95% of the people we spoke with have been forcibly displaced and 50% of them have been displaced four times or more. Three-quarters (77%) of those we spoke with do not feel safe where they have found themselves, as Israel launches attacks on previously cited "safe zones," often informal tented settlements. This feeling is even stronger among men, who feel more likely to face detention, severe mistreatment and even torture.[9]

*Figure 2:*

**Where you are staying now, do you feel you and your family are safe?**




Living in a tent not only means a physical incapacity to find protection from attacks, but also a prolonged lack of security, living with fewer possessions and an inability to safeguard one's few remaining valuables. Mental health is being eroded en masse by a lack of privacy and the reality for parents and caregivers that there are very few ways to shield young people from the horrors of war.

For those living in shelters, things are not markedly better. More than 180 shelters provided by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) have been bombed since October, with hundreds killed while seeking safety there.[10] Many people are now sheltering in abandoned buildings, feeling that physical bricks-and-mortar offers more protection. However, they tend to have less access to services and help than those in UNRWA shelters or tented sites.

People living in their houses, parts of their houses or other people's homes do feel slightly more secure. But those hosted by relatives or acquaintances crave stability, and struggle to deal with overcrowding. A large majority of people we spoke with says their household[11] composition is now different from before October 2023 – whether because family members have died or been injured, families have split up as a survival tactic, people have managed to flee, or households have been separated

> "I want them to provide adequate services to all displaced people, even in places that are not affiliated with UNRWA centres.
>
> *Woman in Deir al Balah*

[9] United Nations Human Rights Council. March 2024. "Anatomy of a Genocide – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese."

[10] United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA). July 2024. "UNRWA Situation Report #121 on the situation in the Gaza strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem."

[11] A household includes individuals who live under the same roof and eat together.

across various shelters amid multiple displacements. Due to displacement, 66% have seen the size of their household increase. For a quarter of the people we spoke with, it has increased by 10 or more people.

## Exhaustion and barriers to coping after 10 months of conflict

Everyone in Gaza is exhausted. Almost every person we spoke to says their ability to cope has been crushed by feelings of insecurity, lack of aid or support and exhaustion. People also mention other factors hindering their ability to care for themselves and their families: the majority (83%) cite a lack of income, while almost half (48%) mention sickness or injury, especially among people over 50 years of age.

*Figure 3:*

**During the past month, have the following personal issues hindered your ability to take care of yourself and your family?**




*Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.*

People pine for their privacy and few simple pleasures. In light of massive displacement and fear, people say that the loss of privacy and psychological stress is severe, particularly for those who have been displaced. The absence of privacy impacts the simplest daily tasks, from changing clothes to discussing family matters. A man in Gaza City told us: "**People, even if they are staying with relatives or with a host family, are robbed of their privacy or their right to live as they please due to personal and social differences.**"

Another woman from Deir al Balah wanted us to know that the war did not just strip away people's material possessions, but also parts of their identity. "**I had talents such as poetry, singing and drawing. When the war came, I felt that I had lost a part of myself,**" she said.

> We have been living in a small space with extended family and it's really hard to get any privacy or personal space.
>
> *Woman in Gaza City*

# People desperately need safety, food and clean water

People paint a harrowing picture of living with no access to food or water, surrounded by the sights and smells of the dead, feeling constantly humiliated and bearing the psychological toll of trying to cling to hope.

People's coping ability decreases with each new displacement and the more times a person has been forced to flee, the more negative their coping strategies become. Most people in Gaza are now cutting their food intake, drinking dirty water and postponing showers, particularly in North Gaza and Gaza City. A quarter of those we spoke to say they have been forced to send their children to work. Generally, people aged 18-30 are more active in seeking assistance and working compared to other age groups; however in Gaza City, fewer people have been able to work.

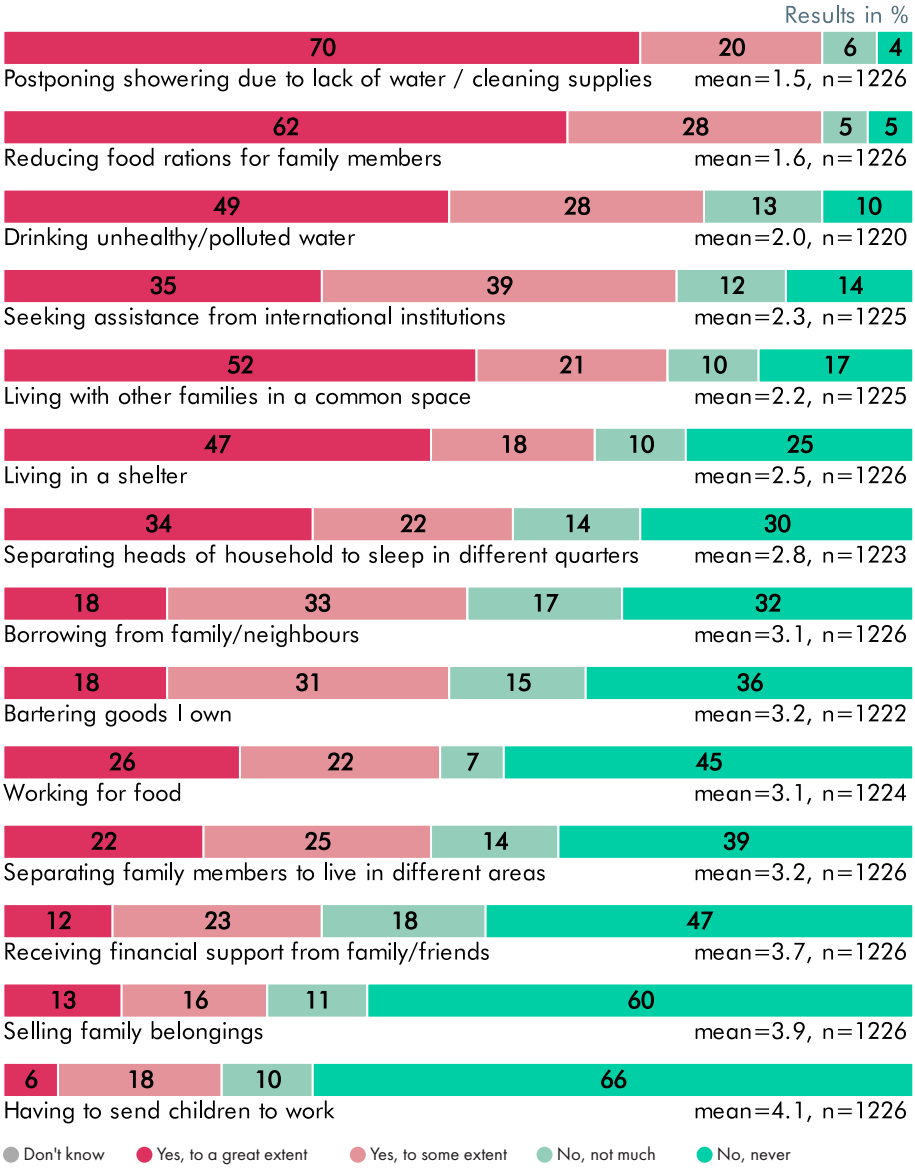
> Over time, with the lack of flour, we began to eat corn flour and barley flour, and we reduced the number of meals in order to provide more of it for the children.
>
> *Woman in Gaza City*

In northern governorates, people mention seeking assistance more often than in southern governorates.

It is against this backdrop that humanitarian actors, from within and outside communities, try to meet untenable levels of need.

*Figure 4:*

**Did you or your household rely on any of the following mechanisms to cope with the difficulties/challenges of the current situation?**




The number of people calling for the most basic aid like food, water and tents is alarming. Every person we interviewed says that obtaining food and water, along with ensuring the safety and security of their own lives and family, are their top priorities. Every person we interviewed also said they wanted to escape the constant pollution and dust.

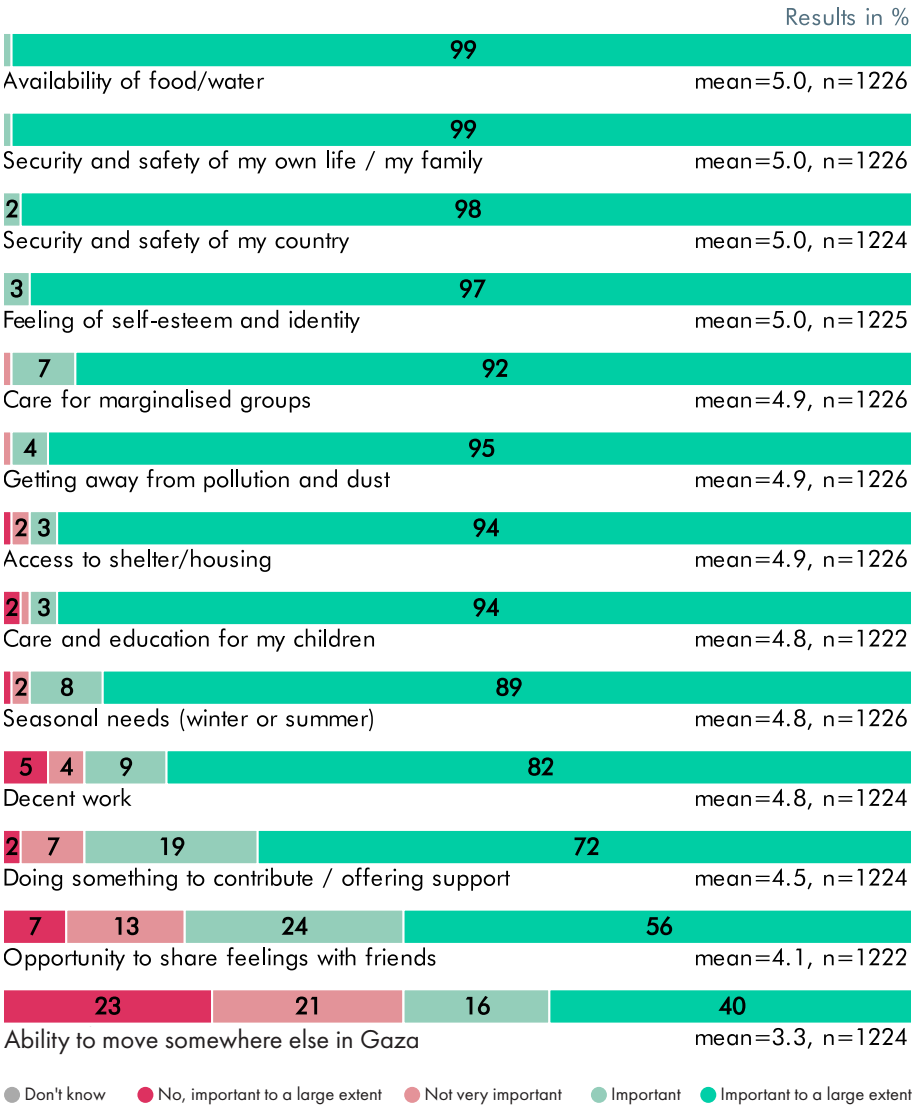
Water points are a lifeline as clean water becomes more and more scarce. People talk constantly of the need for clean water and the stress of trying to live with dirty water. They worry about its health implications for their families, as their days are often completely taken up by the quest to try to replenish potable water supplies.

> We are not living. There is no life. There is no safety, no shelter, no food and no usable water.
>
> *Man in Khan Yunis*

> We neither eat nor drink, but we are steadfast.
>
> *Man in Deir al Balah*

*Figure 5:*

**What are your most immediate priorities?**




People rely on an ever-dwindling number of local healthcare centres to look after themselves and their families (34%). As of August 2024, more than half the health service points in Gaza are not functioning, half the hospitals are no longer operational and the remainder can only accommodate critical injuries.[12] Health is a frequent concern for people and almost half the people we spoke to mentioned that injury or illness hinder their capacity to cope. According to Médecins Sans Frontières, the healthcare system in Gaza has been "systematically dismantled."[13] UN figures show that at least 24 hospitals in the territory are now completely out of service[14] and upwards of 500 health workers have been killed.[15]

> We fear the spread of epidemics and diseases.
>
> *Woman in Deir al Balah*

[12] World Health Organization. 2024. "oPt Country Dashboard" Consulted August 2024.
[13] Médecins Sans Frontières. May 2024. "Strikes, raids and incursions: Seven months of relentless attacks on healthcare in Palestine."
[14] World Health Organization. 2024. "oPt Country Dashboard" Consulted August 2024.
[15] Ibid.

*Figure 6:*

**During the past month, what were the most important non-financial resources available to you to take care of yourself and your family?**

Results in %, n=1226

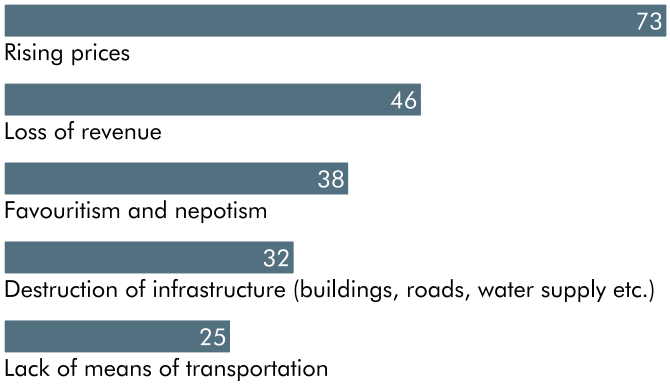



*Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.*

*Figure 7:*

**What were the challenges that hindered your ability to utilise these resources (both physical and non-physical)?**

Results in %, n=1226




*Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.*

Life in Gaza is a constant series of micro-decisions about how best to protect families amid the most extreme forms of human violence. Almost all people we spoke with (95%) cite religion or faith as their primary way of taking care of themselves, followed closely by looking after children and staying in contact with loved ones. Many (mostly those under 30) say they have managed to work in exchange for food (48%).

Supporting others helps many to cope. A man in Gaza City told us that it is not possible to "**sit and watch the suffering of people.**" Community volunteers we met echoed this sentiment and have organised themselves in groups to try and help others with their skyrocketing needs. Around one-third of people (31%) say they are coping thanks to support from community groups, especially in Gaza City, while 13% cite support from Palestinians living abroad. An aid provider in Khan Yunis gave the example of family members abroad pulling resources together to support the remainder of their extended families in Gaza: "**Some families abroad sent some financial support and appointed a family member in Gaza to distribute it. They gave 200 shekels (EUR 49) to each family, and 500 shekels (EUR 122) to each person whose home was destroyed.**"

*Figure 8:*

**During the past month, have you used the following methods to take care of yourself and your family?**




*Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.*

Coping mechanisms manifest in different ways for different families: some are saving whatever scarce resources they still have access to, while others are seeking to ensure their bloodlines survive this war. A woman in Deir al Balah told us: "**We used to gather in one room so that if there was a bombing, we would die together. But in this war, we separate, to make sure someone remains to carry the family name.**"

Aid providers tell us that some coping strategies, such as family separation, have led to mixed impacts on the role of women within their households. According to their anecdotal evidence, separation from their husbands has given some the role of decision-maker for the household, but expanded responsibility for daily tasks such as collecting firewood or waiting in long lines to receive aid has increased the daily burden on others.

### How people in Gaza are helping each other

## Facilitating access to healthcare, one Facebook post at a time

Tala,[16] a nutritionist, found herself displaced and thrown into a new role when the war began in Gaza. She is now using her skills, resources and determination to support those around her.

Acknowledging the severe shortage of medication, Tala started using her Facebook page to crowdfund and support chronically ill patients. It started with a plea for epilepsy medication. She recalls: "**I posted on Facebook asking about it and a foreign institution contacted me saying that the treatment was available to them, so I bought about 100 boxes of each type.**" After that, Tala headed to camps and organised medical days where she personally verified each person's identity, ensuring that the limited supply was distributed to those in need.

Around the same time, another institution reached out to Tala to facilitate the evacuation of 30 children for cancer treatment abroad. Her Facebook post about it led to many people in Gaza reaching out to her. Though the mission was successful, and the children were evacuated, it came at a personal cost. She felt that people questioned her motivation, and worried that she could not reach everyone. "**Everyone is calling me and some are cursing and insulting me,**" she told us. Despite the deluge of calls, she says she remains focused on the mission. "**The need is great and the people I can help are limited. This is beyond my control. As long as I can help, I must help.**"

[16] The name of the interviewee was replaced to safeguard their anonymity.

# Mutual aid comes naturally, but is reaching its limits as the war grinds on

In a context of low supplies, while donor governments have experimented with air drops[17] and a failed aid pier,[18] people are doing what they can to survive without sufficient assistance. Voluntary, reciprocal support and resource-sharing among individuals and communities is not a novel concept in Gaza. While displacement and lack of communication have certainly disrupted people's social relationships, many have turned to each other for support. Displaced people have tried to settle in the same shelter location or tent cluster as relatives or neighbours. Others, now living with people from different regions, have formed new bonds.

Many people offer support to others in their community, most commonly by providing support to organise daily affairs (72%), supplying food and water (45%), taking care of children (38%) or sharing information on humanitarian aid and services (33%). While women are more likely to receive financial support than men, around one in five people we spoke to in Gaza are receiving this type of support from other community members. Twenty percent are staying in clusters of tents, and almost half of them say they have been able to borrow land, tools and hardware supplies from others to enable them to construct and reinforce their shelters.

A woman in Gaza City told us: "**Displacement and loss have become an eventuality. In terms of the minuscule resources available, people are helping each other with whatever they have. For example, helping someone charge their phone. It is so vital to try and be connected. Providing each other with water, exchanging food, informing each other of urgent information, and just talking to each other.**"

According to a local community leader in Deir al Balah, displaced and non-displaced communities came together early on to provide support by pooling whatever resources they had access to. He told us: "**We were able to find three locations in one area to host the displaced people. We had to work with their own leaders and volunteers to establish their tented communities and find other housing arrangements in host families. People helped each other erect the tents, move in and adjust to things for the coming days. Volunteers provided open kitchens to serve food. They collected wood and other materials for cooking. They even collected some donations from local community members. It took time to organise and manage all the expectations and fears and get communities to work together with respect.**"

People also support each other by sharing information and providing a space for others to vent. Information is a critical commodity in times of crisis; people rely on each other to pass it on or make sense of it. In Gaza, a third of the people (33%) we spoke to provide information and 48% receive information as a form of help and support from their communities, especially in Gaza City.

Mutual psychosocial support is a widespread priority. Four out of five people say that speaking with friends is very important to them and around one in four (24%) of people mentioned either receiving or providing psychosocial support within the community.

People living in shelters view the role of community spaces as more important than do people living in tent sites or their original residences. This makes sense, as most shelters are schools that have been repurposed for communal living out of necessity, so it is stressful when communal services such as water points and children's centres become overcrowded or lack supplies. When asked about the most important resources available to them, people often mention community kitchens, which provide a means through which local aid groups can provide support and residents

> "During the war, relationships were strengthened with people we did not know well previously and new, strong, solid relationships were established.
>
> *Aid provider in Khan Yunis*

[17] CNN. March 2024. "The US is dropping aid into Gaza. Here's why that will do little to ease a humanitarian crisis."

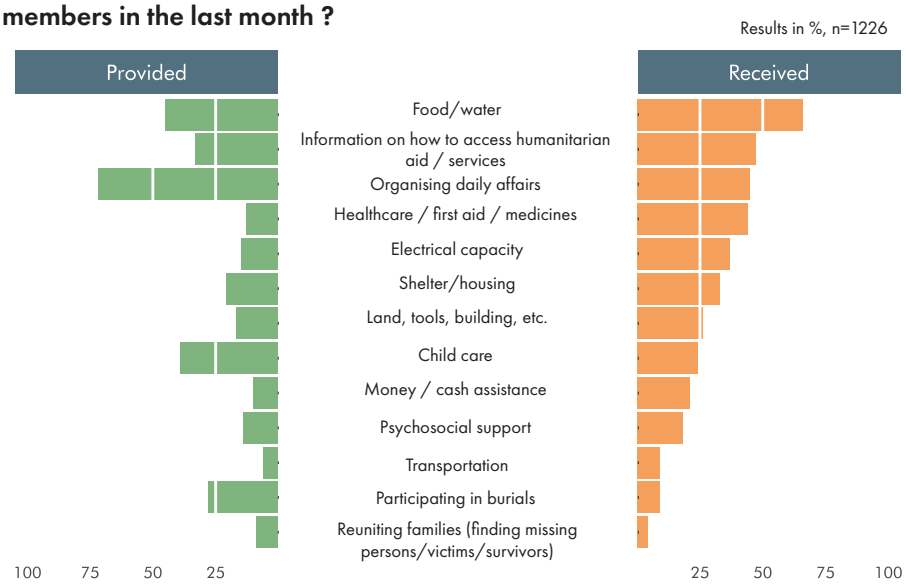
[18] Al Jazeera. July 2024. "US military shuts down problematic Gaza aid pier, shifts to Israeli port."

can pool resources to try and reach those in greatest need. In Gaza City and North Gaza, people seem to rely more on peers, volunteers and community groups than in other governorates.

Thirty-eight percent mention that favouritism and nepotism limit their ability to access or use available community resources, such as healthcare centres, community water points, communal spaces or previous belongings. Ongoing attacks, as well as the destruction of infrastructure and lack of transport have presented major physical barriers (32% and 25% respectively).

*Figure 9:*

**Have you provided and/or received help/support from other community members in the last month ?**




Informal initiatives at the community level have been catalysts for further support. International aid workers told us that such grassroots efforts have sometimes produced more tangible results than larger organisations with greater financial resources.

According to a displaced businesswoman who is now heading a volunteer group initiative in Gaza, coming together was a chance for individuals with limited resources and no access to income to help themselves:

**"We created a volunteer group after the war started and more than 100 people joined. We volunteered to provide psychosocial counselling and play for children using a tent near the beach. We did a model high school exam for graduating students who were deprived of taking their exams, to make them feel connected and to remind them of the value of education. After many initiatives, we started receiving support from local and international supporters."**

### How people in Gaza are helping each other

## Local committees provide essential services – and information

When 6,000 people were left without water after the main well supplying a neighbourhood was destroyed, Majed[19] formed a "**committee from the neighbourhood residents, discussed the options for support that could be provided by relief organisations, and verified the accuracy of the data.**" After assessing the needs and exploring potential solutions, Majed and his team secured pipes and cables to deliver water to the area.

Majed has been organising various ad hoc community support initiatives since the war began, from needs assessments to coordinating supplies and rallying people to come together to help each other.

"**The reality was terrifying. We could not imagine how we would provide services in the face of this amount of destruction,**" he said. But necessity soon began to dictate the interventions of his local committee.

Majed says he always had an interest in working in sanitation and community utilities, through his relationships with the responsible authorities and international organisations, and describes "stepping up" to fill gaps left by the war. "**When the war started, I found myself and the team facing the responsibilities of providing services,**" he said.

"**The great vacuum left by the war is what made people search for their individual and collective contribution,**" he said, noting that community unity has made a big difference. "**These things do not concern an individual. They concern an entire neighbourhood.**"

Aid providers describe how many informal initiatives are often funded by local individuals with financial means or significant social connections – or by the diaspora, who connect with volunteers and youth groups. They acknowledge that connecting and supporting mutual aid initiatives with necessary material, financial resources, advice and moral support, is essential for better reach. Strong involvement from community volunteers and mukhtars in formal humanitarian assistance can also encourage the emergence of new mutual aid initiatives.

However, community leaders are said to play a mixed role in these initiatives; some contribute by providing guidance, connections to pool resources and coordination, while others are seen by aid workers as ineffective or even corrupt. Community-based initiatives can reach areas or groups that more formal organisations may struggle to access, though fairness remains a concern. Many say the people benefiting are relatives of those in charge, or specific communities targeted for a particular reason due to personal interests.

There is a risk that exhaustion erodes life-saving mutual aid efforts. Community volunteers and aid providers say that while community solidarity flourished at the beginning of the war, the prolonged conflict has caused people to become more self-protective and less cooperative. Scarcity of the most basic goods and high prices have pushed some people to prioritise their needs and those of their families over solidarity with their extended communities.

As a man in Gaza City told us: "**At the beginning of the war, people helped each other more. But with the length of the war and the scarcity of resources, people became less interested in helping each other. Every person is trying to protect his home and his family only.**" During in-depth discussions, both aid providers and community volunteers mentioned the erosion of mutual aid within communities as resources become scarcer.

> "Now, we are all displaced.
>
> *Community leader in Deir al Balah*

[19] The name of the interviewee was replaced to safeguard their anonymity.

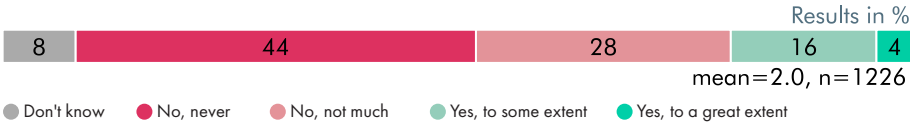
# Accessing aid is dangerous and chaotic, and many say it is not fair

The majority (58%) of people say they feel unsafe at distributions and only 62% tell us they feel respected in the process. These are lower figures than Ground Truth tends to see in other humanitarian situations, and a huge departure from global humanitarian norms, in which everyone should feel safe and respected based on the principle of "do no harm". The context in Gaza poses such deep challenges that it has proven impossible to uphold these standards. Theft and looting of aid entering Gaza adds to the violence from the combat. A woman in Deir al Balah told us that when an aid truck passes, "**they attack it**", out of sheer need.

Only 20% of people surveyed think aid is going to those who need it most, while 18% think aid provision is fair. People feel strongly that aid distributions are corrupted by favouritism. Both aid and non-aid recipients cite favouritism as a barrier to getting what they need.

*Figure 10:*

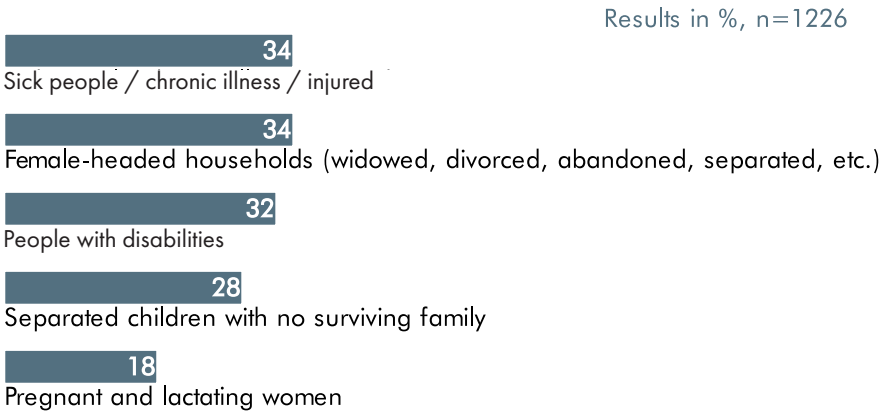
**Are aid and services going to those who need it the most?**




A third of people (34%) we spoke with think that women-headed households are left out of aid distributions and 28% express concerns for children with no surviving family. Many people also mention the sick, injured and chronically ill (34%) and those living with disabilities (32%) as frequently missing out on assistance. Across governorates, people in Khan Yunis tend to say that people with disabilities, women-headed households and pregnant or lactating women are the groups most left out by aid distributions, while most people in Gaza City say they do not know who was left out (28%) or that no one was left out (25%).

*Figure 11:*

**Who do you think is left out?**




*Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.*

Ten percent of people we spoke with say that those with no links to people facilitating distributions or in charge of registration and distribution lists are at a constant disadvantage and get left out. Many mention the concept of "wasta"[20] and the need to have this with powerholders to be able to access assistance. A few also mention that other people left out of aid distributions include those staying with relatives or in

> "Aid is delivered to all areas, but in some areas it does not reach some people due to favouritism, poor distribution and the distribution to the same people every time.
>
> *Man in Gaza City*

[20] Wasta is an expression prevalent in Arab societies that represents the practice of using personal connections or influential relationships to gain advantages, favours or even shortcuts past administrative roadblocks. Source: Arabic Online. July 2023. "'Wasta' – the Arabic Expression for Influence."

their original residences, marginalised families, older people and smaller families.

This issue extends beyond aid; it also affects access to services across the board, including securing scarce supplies at markets. People feel that merchants are monopolising certain products, who keep supplies for people close to them.

During in-depth discussions, people frequently mentioned ways to tackle corruption and unfair distribution, such as avoiding intermediaries and ensuring that distributions are managed by representatives who are voted in by the community. "**We have the right to receive aid equally,**" one woman in Khan Yunis told us, "**There are reliable people to distribute packages and aid.**" Another man in Deir al Balah stressed that: "**Improving aid should be backed by proper needs assessments and improving coordination across institutions. [...] Institutions go to the camps, verify the people, obtain people's data and provide urgent aid.**" To achieve this, a man in Gaza City highlights that community participation is crucial: "**To make aid distributions more effective, [...] there is a need to establish a committee responsible for assessing the number of people in need, as well as registering people for aid distributions.**"

In the north, community volunteers told us that organising aid distributions has become one of their top priorities since more assistance started reaching the north in recent months. Ensuring as many people as possible are reached requires many volunteers and organisers. In the middle and south of Gaza, where millions of people were hosted in the war's early phases, organising aid is complex and large-scale. It has had to take into consideration the best interests of the local community.

> **"We had to create a group of individuals, a committee, to oversee the distribution of assistance after it started trickling into the northern areas of Gaza. This helped ensure more accurate eligibility assessments, fairer distribution and inclusion of everyone."**
>
> *Man working with a local NGO*

Discussions with aid providers highlighted the critical role of mukhtars in both solving problems and deciding who receives aid and who does not. An aid worker in Deir Al Balah told us: "**Previously, the role of the mukhtar was to solve problems and decide the fate of the people. Today the mukhtar is the one who decides whether or not a person can receive aid.**" When a site or shelter does not have a Ministry of Social Development committee, people say they must organise themselves and mobilise social connections to improve the level of access to aid.

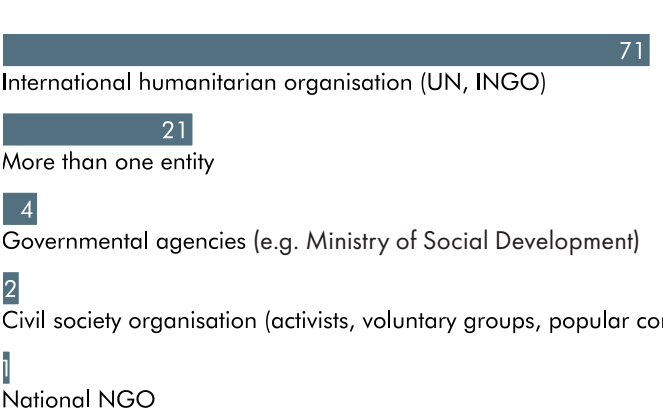
# Foreign aid is far from enough, and hampered by a lack of direct engagement

The slowness of aid to reach Gaza was palpable during our last report.[21] Ten months into the war, reliance on aid has skyrocketed as other resources have steadily depleted. Most people we spoke to (71%) say their primary source of support in the past six months has been international humanitarian organisations. The majority (87%) have received some form of help or support from formal or informal sources over the past six months. However, only 22% are confident they will be able to access any more aid in the coming months. The wait for aid is causing considerable stress.

[21] Ground Truth Solutions. January 2024. "'Stop the war and let me return to my home, even if it is destroyed.' Community priorities and perceptions of aid and support in Gaza."

*Figure 12:*

**Who has offered you the most support in the last six months?**



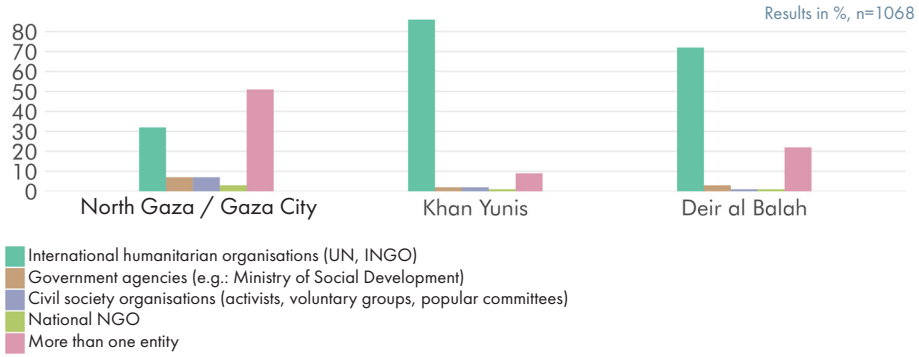

*Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.*

Aid providers are working against crippling odds to get supplies into Gaza and distribute them as best they can in an unimaginably restrictive environment amid constant attacks.

In Deir Al Balah, where international humanitarian organisations established their coordination hub after the assault on Rafah in May, the majority of people identified international aid as the primary source of support. The same was the case in Khan Yunis. However, in Gaza City and North Gaza, it is civil society organisations, national NGOs and governmental agencies that play the most critical and direct role in providing support. The very limited physical access that international actors can secure to those northern governorates has forced them to find other ways to provide aid, further relying on local or national actors. Aid providers highlighted that international organisations cannot replace the role of civil society organisations in the knowledge they have about people and their needs. An aid provider in Khan Yunis told us: "**In the war, international institutions have taken on the role of local institutions, and this is one of the most dangerous things that will happen on the ground because it erases the influence of civil society.**"

*Figure 13:*

**Who has offered you the most support in the last six months?**




Almost everyone who received help in the last six months says they were given food and potable water. Around one in three people tell us they have received healthcare and hygiene supplies, while roughly one in five have received cash assistance. Only 14% say they have received support with shelter or housing. A small percentage say they have been given help with childcare (8%) or psychosocial support (6%) by aid agencies. Other support mentioned is the provision of electricity, toilets and showers, transportation and assistance with burials.

*Figure 14:*

**What type of help/support have you/your household directly received during the last 6 months?**

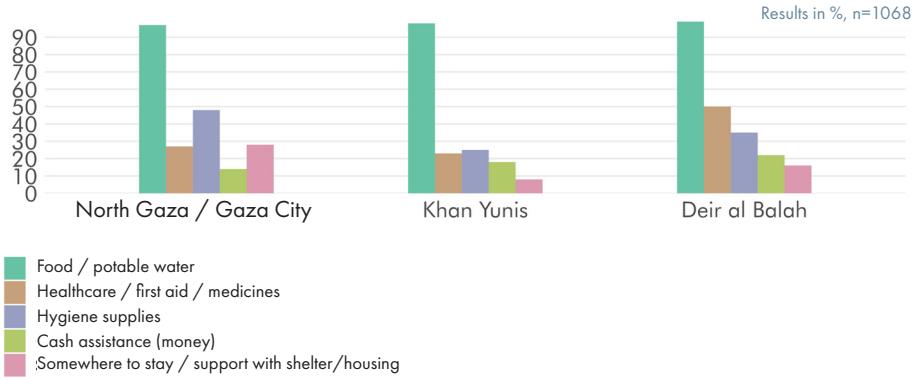
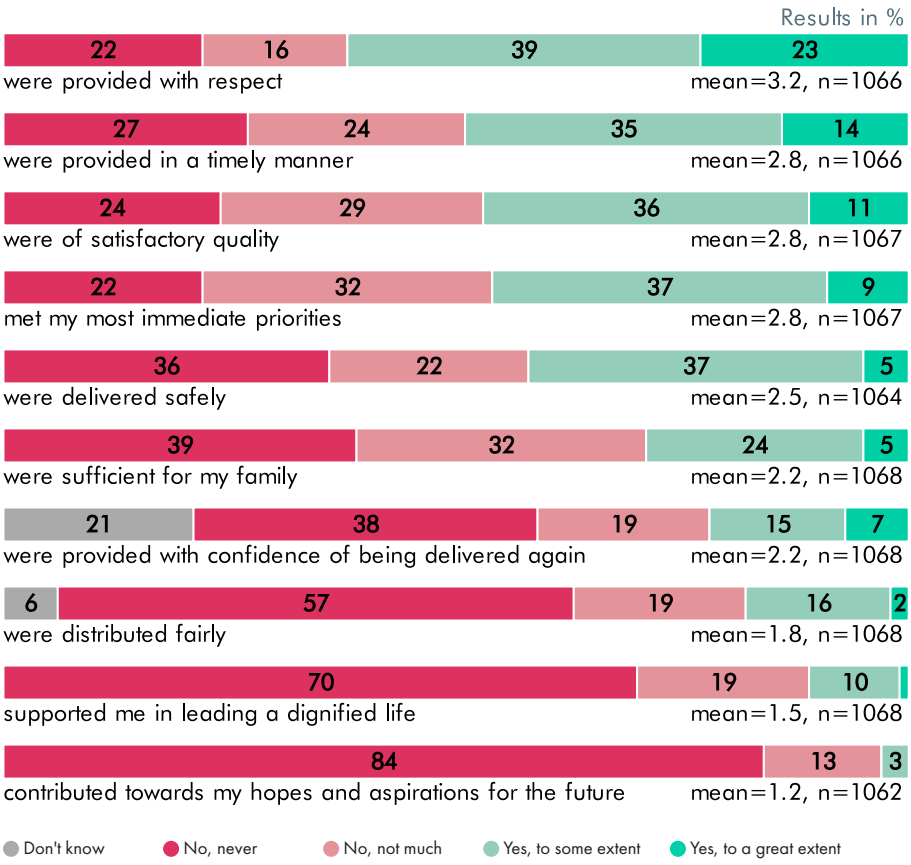



*Figure 15:*

**Please rate each of the following statements. The aid and services ...**




## Aid efforts struggle to meet basic needs and confidence in future support is low

Aid is not meeting the level of need, and it certainly is not supporting well-being. Half of those we spoke with (49%) say they received the aid when they needed it, and 46% say the assistance or services provided met their most immediate needs at the time. Only 29% say the aid was sufficient for their whole family. Aid providers described how people come to collect aid even when they are not satisfied with its relevance or when the cost of transportation to receive it is close to the value of the aid. They come out of fear of being removed from the distribution lists and losing their right to further assistance.

In terms of the quality of aid and services received, 47% find it satisfactory. People sharing their homes with larger groups (including family and non-family members) call for more support. Men tend to feel aid quality is less satisfactory than women do;

> Food rations are not distributed fairly. A family consisting of two people is treated like a family with six people or more, which deprives many from taking their share.
>
> *Man in Gaza City*

a man in Deir al Balah urged aid organisations to "**spare us from canned goods,**" a sentiment that has been repeated for many months.

Respondents do not have confidence that receiving aid once will mean that they will receive it again. Although almost everyone has received some kind of aid at some point during the last six months, just 22% of those we spoke with feel confident they will receive any aid again. Only 11% of people we spoke with feel that aid and services are enabling them to live a dignified life, while just 3% feel aid gives them hope for the future. There is a loud call for diverse aid services beyond basic necessities. A community volunteer in Deir al Balah told us that based on her experience, "**support is needed in all its forms: psychologically, educationally, socially and economically.**"

Despite having very little access to supplies and international assistance, people in Gaza City are more likely to answer positively on aid quality, quantity and safety. They are also more likely to be confident they will receive aid during the coming month. By contrast, people living in Khan Yunis – where 86% identified international aid as the primary source of support – report the worst conditions for aid and are more likely to say they do not get enough aid and do not feel safe while accessing it. The data collection was conducted at a time when access to aid was increasing in Gaza City and North Gaza after months of being almost completely cut off from aid.[22] However, many people had been recently forcibly displaced from Rafah to Khan Yunis and Deir Al Balah before the interviews were conducted. In Gaza City, it is worth noting that help and support has been provided to a larger extent by local actors than in Khan Yunis.

### How people in Gaza are helping each other

## Under bombardment, fulfilling the right to education and play

Before October 7, Yasmeen[23] was a young teacher. When the war started, she and her relatives were determined not to let the conflict rob their children of their right to education.

The initiative was simple: "**The idea was to teach our children, our neighbours' children and those displaced,**" she explains. It quickly grew into an idea for a fully-fledged kindergarten. "**We now have about 120 students, and we were able to set up more than one classroom.**"

Finding basic equipment was the first challenge. "**We needed to prepare the space: we needed chairs, a water-fountain and good lighting**," says Yasmeen. With support from her family, she was able to buy chairs and find water. "**But we still had the problem of batteries for lighting. We were not able to provide them, so we had to rely on natural lighting.**"

At first the project was self-supported, but slowly she found others willing to back the kindergarten. "**Through the father of one of our students, we received support from an association,**" she tells us.

The kindergarten has become more than just a place of learning; it has turned into a space where children can find happiness despite the surrounding chaos. "**The joy of children. I love children and I love to see the joy in their eyes,**" says Yasmeen of her motivation for starting the centre. "**They are now coming to the kindergarten happy; they do not want to leave – they love the place and the teachers.**"

[22] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). June 2024. "Humanitarian Situation Update #182 | Gaza Strip."

[23] The name of the interviewee was replaced to safeguard their anonymity.

## Community engagement is tough but not impossible

The recurrent forced displacement of Palestinians means that humanitarian organisations must continually restart their operations. Only 9% of people we spoke to say they have had the opportunity to participate in decisions about aid they receive – regardless of the type of shelter in which they reside.

During in-depth discussions, aid providers highlighted the importance of time and experience to understand which community representative or official they can rely on based on the level of trust that people they represent have in them, as well as the importance of maintaining direct contact with people to ensure no specific group is left out or excluded. Aid providers cite many ways agencies attempt to engage with communities such as messaging apps, social media pages, and free phone lines, broadly considered to be ineffective. They recognise that the most critical way to engage is "**through continuous direct contact with people, at all times, in all circumstances, and in all available ways**" allowing for face-to-face interactions, empathy, and solidarity.

*Figure 16:*

**Have you had opportunities to participate in decisions about the aid and services you receive?**

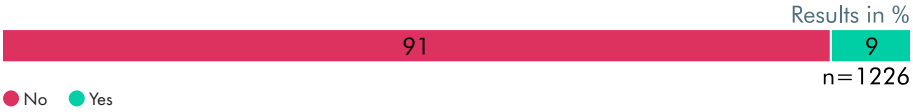



*Figure 17:*

**What is the best way to enable you to participate in decisions about the design of aid programmes?**




*Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.*

In Deir Al Balah, Khan Yunis and Gaza City, most people say they want to speak directly with humanitarian workers. A man in Gaza City told us, "**There needs to be a clearer line of communication between aid organisations and us so that we understand how aid is being distributed and can provide feedback.**" In North Gaza, more than half the people recommend using community volunteers as intermediaries, while many in Deir Al Balah, Khan Yunis and North Gaza recommend listening better to household representatives.

# Acute cash shortages, profiteering and soaring prices

People are trying to hold onto their financial resources. But with each new displacement, people are less able to maintain their incomes. Fewer than half (45%) of those we spoke with are still earning an income. A third (34%) are borrowing money, taking on varying levels of debt to navigate uncertain times, with rising anxiety about how they will pay it back. Aid providers tell us that the loss of income has greatly impacted household dynamics. Whoever has access to an income tends to take a central role in family decisions.

People with means (especially those still living in their homes or parts of them) are still reliant on markets to obtain the things they need, especially in Khan Yunis, but skyrocketing prices and lost income hinder their ability to get what they need. Although some people in Gaza (22%) still have access to remaining savings, transaction fees imposed by some financial service providers and profiteering by merchants are consuming savings and income at a rapid rate. The liquidity crisis in Gaza means people are physically unable to access their financial resources. Media reported in May that "just a handful of ATMs remain operational in the strip" and "a shortage of bank notes is gripping Gaza."[24]

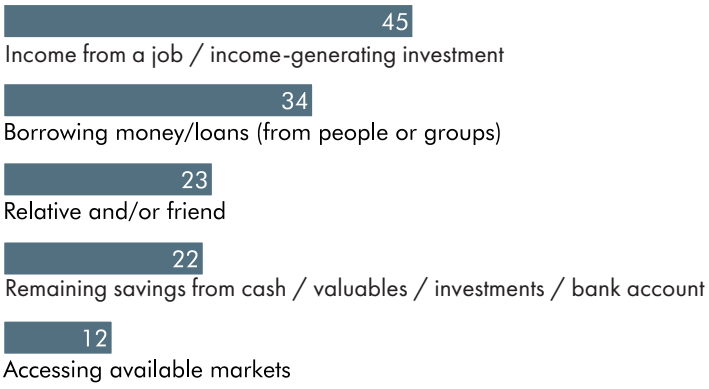
Severe shortages of food and water are leaving people easily exploited by price inflation and high commission fees. A man in Gaza City explained: "**There are two obstacles for people to buy from the local market. First the cash merchants take a commission of 10 to 15% [on every withdrawal]. After you get the money and go to the local market, the market is empty.**" Women are less likely to have access to an income or loan than men, and tend to receive more support from relatives and friends. Yet, according to a woman in Deir al Balah, "**whoever has cash keeps it to themself due to the lack of cash in the country.**"

In Gaza City, people are less likely than people in the south to count on markets to sell belongings and raise money. A community member in Deir al Balah highlighted the price differences seen across the territory: "**The available markets are different. For example, the Nuseirat market is cheaper than the Deir al-Balah market. The goods in Deir al-Balah are expensive because people raised the price of the goods and rents are more expensive.**"

*Figure 18:*

**During the past month, what were the most important resources available to you to take care of yourself and your family financially?**

Results in %, n=1226




*Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.*

> Everyone is in need, even those who have money in the bank are currently in need because they are unable to withdraw it.
>
> *Aid provider in Khan Yunis*

> Merchants are hoarding supplies and selling them at inflated prices, making it impossible for most of us to buy what we need.
>
> *Man in North Gaza*

[24] Reuters. May 2024. "Criminal gangs, profiteers thrive in Gaza as cash shortage worsens misery."

# People turn to radio and each other for essential information

People say that access to timely and accurate information is limited and fragmented. Sixty percent of people we spoke with access information primarily via word of mouth (e.g. from friends, family, neighbours), while 57% say they rely on radio to receive news about the war and available assistance. Of grave concern is that 9% of people who have not received any aid or services say they have no sources of information at all, while 13% of all people we spoke with say they do not trust anyone or any kind of information anymore.

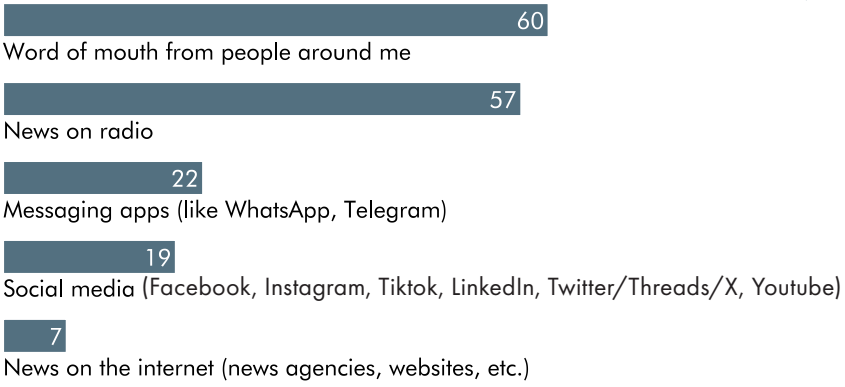
People in Gaza City are more likely to rely on word of mouth than social media. In Deir Al Balah people are more likely to access news on messaging apps than in other governorates. People aged 31-50 are more likely to rely on word of mouth than 18-30 year-olds, while people aged over 51 tend to use the radio more than younger age groups. Education also plays a role in access to information. People with higher education levels tend to prefer using messaging apps and social media.

Journalists, who are under constant and targeted attack,[25] continue to play a critical role in disseminating trusted information in Gaza. For two thirds of people (64%), local journalists remain a trusted source of information.

*Figure 19:*

**How are you accessing information and news (about the war, the situation on the ground and available assistance)?**

Results in %, n=1226

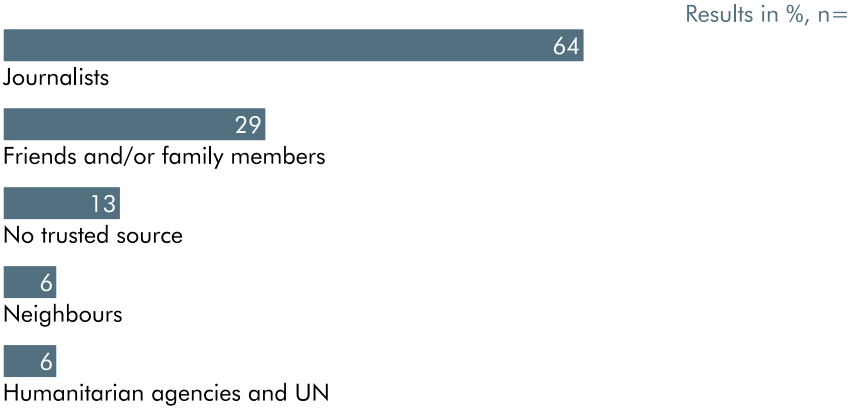



*Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.*

*Figure 20:*

**Who would you trust to receive information and news from?**

Results in %, n=1226




*Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.*

> We rely heavily on social media for news and updates, but sometimes it is hard to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources. This often leads to confusion and misinformation.
>
> *Woman in Deir al Balah*

[25] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. February 2024."Gaza: UN experts condemn killing and silencing of journalists."

## Information on aid is hard to find

When aid is scarce and accessing it is dangerous, getting the right information about how, when and where to find assistance is critical. An alarming 70% do not feel informed about how to register for humanitarian aid and services. Whatever information about aid that people do receive is mainly through word of mouth (88%), with social media and radio (14% and 4% respectively) also playing a role. Sporadic internet availability and a lack of transport also hinder people's ability to access information.

Just 13% say they receive information directly from humanitarian organisations about how to access their services, although the percentage is higher in Deir al Balah (21%). More people in Khan Yunis mention receiving information through social media (19%) than in Deir al Balah or in the northern governorates (9%).

Almost half the people (48%) we spoke to would like to receive information on aid directly, although preferences differ across governorates. In both Deir Al Balah and Khan Yunis, two-thirds of people recommend using public announcements. In Gaza City and North Gaza, people mainly suggest that aid providers share information on assistance by phone. More than half of those who did not access aid in the past six months recommend disseminating information through community volunteers.

*Figure 21:*

**Do you feel informed about how to register for aid and services?**

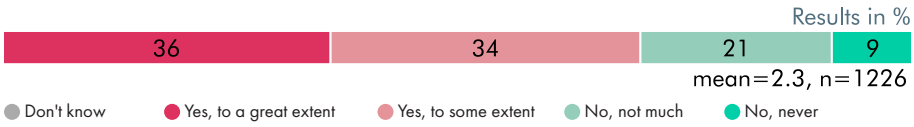



*Figure 22:*

**How did you receive information about humanitarian aid and services (where it is available, how to access it, eligibility criteria) during the past six months?**




*Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.*

Many community volunteers work closely with formal aid providers, as national and international humanitarian organisations rely on local people to facilitate needs assessments, registrations and aid distributions.

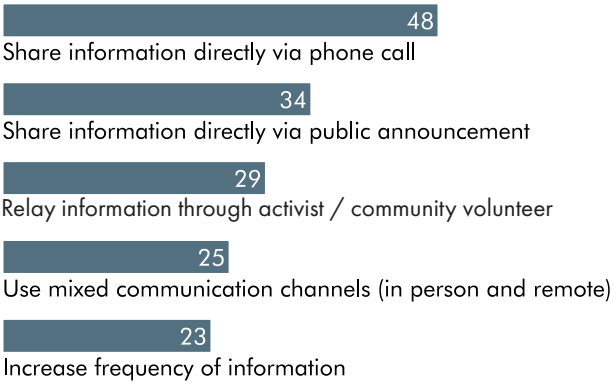
> It is challenging to get timely updates on aid distribution. Often, we find out about these things too late, so we cannot access the help we need.
>
> *Man in Gaza City*

> [The volunteers] have become essential in filling the information gap. They provide updates on available aid and support services, which helps us stay informed and connected.
>
> *Woman in Deir al Balah*

*Figure 23:*

**What can aid providers change to ensure all people have access to information about aid?**

Results in %, n=1226




*Note: Percentages in the graph do not equal 100% as respondents could choose multiple options.*

# What people in Gaza want you to know

People in Gaza call on the world to acknowledge what is happening and stop the violence. Many feel that the world has forgotten about them, and perceive the international community as a silent partner in the atrocities. They continually use words like "hell", "tragedy", "humiliation", "injustice", "destruction" and "genocide" when asked what they would most like people to know.

People reinforce the critical need for support with healthcare, food, clean water and hygiene. The stress of not having food and water is made clear by how many people raise it again at the end of surveys.

Many also strongly state that to be able to recover, justice and accountability should remain a priority. They mention the perceived impotence of international mechanisms such as the security council.

"End the war, bring back peace and stability to the Gaza Strip, hold the occupation and those responsible for the war accountable, and make Gaza beautiful again when it is rebuilt."

*Woman in Gaza City*

"I hope that the world stands with us and calls for a ceasefire."

*Woman in Deir al Balah*

In the face of such a horrendous reality, some people simply want the world to acknowledge that Palestinians, like any person in the world, are regular human beings who have rights. Not just victims, but not heroes either.

"I expect them to send [a team] to investigate the crimes that are happening, look into them, and stop them."

*Man in Deir al Balah*

"Look at us with mercy and compassion. Why have you left us in this situation until now?"

*Woman in Deir al Balah*

"Everyone knows what is happening, but they do nothing.

*Man in Khan Yunis*

"They should abolish the United Nations Charter and all these empty stories, because we are not benefiting from them. The whole narrative about human rights, the right to play, education, and life — this is all nonsense.

*Woman in Deir al Balah*

"The Palestinians in general, especially in the Gaza strip, should not be viewed as either inferior to the rest of humanity or as superhumans. Look at us as normal human beings.

*Man in Deir al Balah*

People in Gaza fear for their future. They have been living with restrictions, frequent attacks and regular threats to their safety, freedom and well-being for decades. Even with their safety at immediate risk, for 33%, the fear of being unable to rebuild after all the destruction is among their most pressing concerns. They call for support to recover from the war, such as education and psychological support.

Despite them being exposed to unimaginable atrocities, grief and loss, some people steadfastly maintain that they are remaining in Gaza, comparing themselves to olive or date trees rooted in Palestinian soil. "**I am steadfast, I love my country and I will not give up my country. We will rebuild Gaza again, more beautiful than it was**," said one man in Deir al Balah. "**We are a mighty people who have dignity and we will prevail,**" said another woman.

"We do not want aid from the world. We want to stop the war."
*Woman in Khan Yunis*

> "Help us to live with dignity, to rebuild homes, restore education for our children, provide jobs, and ensure safety.
>
> *Woman in Gaza City*

# What now?

This report is a call to action. It aims to provide an accurate record of the realities, priorities and concerns of people living in Gaza, and to put people and their local initiatives at the centre of the narrative. We are sharing the evidence presented in this report with humanitarian and human rights groups, diaspora initiatives and media.

We also hope to enable those supporting people in Gaza to design ways of working that are informed by the views of the people living through this war, to ensure such views continuously shape aid and recovery efforts. We seek to join forces with partners that aspire to support a response to the crisis that supports people's agency, is shaped by and built on existing mutual aid efforts, is accessible, fair and dignified.

To collaborate, please contact Julien George julien@groundtruthsolutions.org or Samer Said awrad@awrad.org

# Methodology

The quantitative and qualitative data collection tools were designed jointly between AWRAD and GTS and informed by the priorities identified in the first survey round conducted in January 2024 as well as by the desk review and informal discussions with humanitarian actors on their information gaps. The development of the tools was guided by the following research questions:

- How can community resources and mutual aid mechanisms better shape the provision of dignified humanitarian assistance?
- How can people in Gaza inform and partake in humanitarian response planning?

## Quantitative data collection

### Sample design

Our study targets the general adult population (aged 18+ years old) currently living in the Gaza Strip. The sample was designed to cover 1,200 household interviews, to be conducted in nine municipalities[26] across the five governorates of North Gaza, Gaza City, Deir Al Balah, Khan Yunis and Rafah. The actual sample included 1,226 completed interviews. We employed a two-stage stratified sampling approach:

1. **First stage:** We used the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics' census enumeration areas (EA) for the first stage sample and randomly selected 120 EAs (final sample: 127 EAs due to some replacements), stratifying the sample proportional to the municipality population size. The latter has been estimated utilising the most recent estimates published on 13 May 2024 by the University of Oxford[27] and adjusting the numbers at the governorate level to reflect satellite imagery-based data on population movement provided by REACH / IMPACT Initiatives. Due to the current situation of ongoing displacement, reliable estimates of EA population sizes were not possible. Hence, EAs have been sampled with equal probability within each stratum (i.e. municipality).

2. **Second stage:** Within each EA, households were systematically selected using a random walk approach. In order for our sample to be representative of people living in different dwelling types (i.e. makeshift shelters, formal shelters and rented/owned houses), field assessments were conducted. Enumerators were able to identify the two main dwelling types and sample 10 households on each EA using a 5-5 split. In case a specific EA contained only one dwelling type, all 10 households from the same dwelling were selected. Given the complexity of the living situation in the Gaza strip, which made the distinction of different dwelling types difficult, the 5-5 split was not always possible in all target EAs. The household selection strategy varied by location type: in residential areas enumerators used a systematic count interval to sample every 10th household[28] and the same would apply for informal shelters (tents and makeshift displacement camps). In formal shelters within school buildings (classrooms) or shelter buildings (rooms), enumerators counted every fifth classrooms or rooms and sampled a household within that classroom. Respondent selection was determined through a Kish table listing all family members aged 18 and older from the eldest to the youngest, maintaining a 50/50 gender split.

[26] Note that two of the 11 municipalities covering the territory of the Gaza strip, namely Al Mughraqa (Gaza) and Beit Lahiya / Beit Hanun (North Gaza), have not been covered in our sample. They were excluded because they were inaccessible, vacant or the site of ongoing military activity.

[27] Leasure D. and Darin E. 2024. Gaza NowPop Project: Real-time daily population estimates for Gaza governorates from social media user activity. May 13, 2024. Leverhulme Centre for Demographic Science, University of Oxford. Full report/data available upon request from douglas.leasure@demography.ox.ac.uk. Methods adapted from Leasure, D. et al. Nowcasting Daily Population Displacement in Ukraine through Social Media Advertising Data. April 2023; https://doi.org/10.1111/padr.12558

[28] Note that all multi-story buildings were treated as one unit and only one interview was conducted in that building regardless of how many households it held.

[29] We triangulated field assessments conducted by AWRAD with data published by UNOSAT on damaged and destroyed structures in the Gaza strip to identify accessible areas for our study.

### Coverage and exclusion

At the sampling design stage, areas on the east side of Salah Ad-Din Road were excluded for fieldwork because they were inaccessible or vacant.[29] During data collection, some of the sampled EAs needed replacing due to inaccessibility or security concerns, including four EAs in Deir al Balah and Gaza City.

Additionally, due to the increasing escalation of attacks in Rafah, the entire governorate became inaccessible during data collection and the 39 EAs originally scheduled for sampling were redistributed across the other, accessible governorates. The additional EAs in each municipality were sampled proportionally according to estimated population size.

### Limitations

Because of security concerns, enumerators could not use GPS navigation devices during their field work. Generally, therefore, enumerators would review the starting point of their random walk in the assigned EA in advance and reach that point without using GPS. For that reason, interviews were sometimes conducted outside the designated EAs. During the quality checks, AWRAD and GTS jointly reviewed each of those interviews to ensure they were conducted close enough to the designated EA.

### Weighting

Although the sample was designed to be self-weighting, due to the multiple adjustments required to adapt the sample to the continuously changing security situation, design weights have been adopted to compensate for over and under sampling of certain geographical areas and they have been raked to marginal totals by age group and gender. The raking step ensured that survey respondents, when weighted, represented their proper proportions in the population with respect to age group and gender. Marginal totals were based on the 2023 population estimates by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

### Precision of estimates

To calculate margins of error per question we used the "Survey" R package (statistical software used in R programming), specifying our survey design and the raking adopted as detailed above. Note that the precision of our estimates varies from question to question and sample size also varies per question (as some questions are follow-up questions asked to a subset of the total sample). For questions asked to at least 90% of all respondents, margins of error average 2.62% points for likert questions and 2.52% points for binary questions.

## Qualitative data collection

The objective of the qualitative data collection was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the personal experiences and perceptions of citizens in Gaza and local aid providers, by allowing participants to provide detailed and nuanced responses.

### Design

For this round of data collection and considering the security situation, we utilised a semi-structured approach of qualitative data collection, relying on the use of interview guides for in-depth interviews with key informants:

1. **Key informant interviews (KIIs) with self-assigned community volunteers** explored complex topics in depth, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the respondent's experiences, attitudes and behaviours.
2. **Key informant interviews with local aid providers** provided key information on individual perspectives and more confidential experiences that are better explored one-on-one, such as respect, safety and fear of complaining.

### Sampling

We planned to conduct a total of 30 KIIs from both citizens and aid providers, aiming for a 50-50 split in terms of gender and balanced distribution across governorates,[30] while being mindful of people's willingness to voluntarily participate in such activities. We reached in total 22 individuals.

| Approach | Men | Women | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Interviews with community volunteers | 8 | 5 | 13 |
| Interviews with aid providers | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| **Total** | **13** | **9** | **22** |

### Limitations

Due to imposed restriction of movement and the ever-evolving security situation on the ground, some of the semi-structured interviews were conducted over the phone by the enumerator team present in Gaza.

[30] If it was not possible to have a balanced distribution across governorates, we prioritised evenly targeting participants between north and south of the Netzarim military line.

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